



# RVC DYSLEXIA AND DISABILITY GUIDE

The logo for the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), consisting of the letters 'RVC' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'R' and 'C' are black, while the 'V' is white. A black silhouette of a cat's tail is visible to the left of the 'R'.

Royal Veterinary College  
University of London

# WHO IS THIS GUIDE AIMED AT?

**This booklet aims to be a practical guide to studying courses at the Royal Veterinary College with a disability or learning difference, the support available and key information about relevant processes and procedures.**

We hope you will find it useful! The Guide has been written with students' views in mind, after feedback from current RVC students with disabilities.

You may not consider yourself to be 'disabled', however this is broad term used to cover a range of conditions:

- > **Unseen disabilities** such as epilepsy, asthma or cystic fibrosis
- > **Long-term health conditions** such as HIV or chronic fatigue syndrome
- > **Specific learning difficulties** such as dyslexia or dyspraxia
- > **Mental health difficulties** such as depression or schizophrenia
- > **Physical disabilities** such as cerebral palsy or repetitive strain injury
- > **Sensory disabilities** such as hearing loss or visual impairment

You may have individual questions that you want to ask before applying, or during your time at the College. The Disability Officer is available to provide you with the support you need. Further information is available from:

[http://www.rvc.ac.uk/AboutUs/PolicyAndLegal/Accessibility/Dyslexia\\_Disabilities.cfm](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/AboutUs/PolicyAndLegal/Accessibility/Dyslexia_Disabilities.cfm)

This booklet can also be provided in alternative formats such as large print, tape and on disc upon request to the Disability Officer (see page 5 for contact details).



# A STUDENT'S VIEW OF STUDYING AT THE RVC



*Charlotte Dawson  
BVet Med student  
and Vice-President  
of the RVC  
Students' Union*

**Being a dyslexic student at the Royal Veterinary College, I have found the most useful learning supports are things like talking concepts through with peers.**

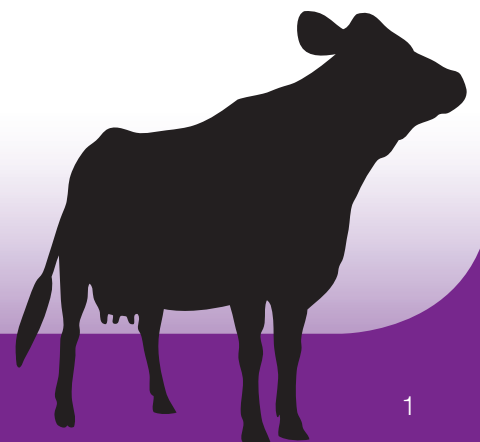
This is possibly the most valuable support available to students and the easiest to obtain. This helps me remember more information than reading a text book alone.

The clinical skills centre is where I get to practice my theory and really get to grips with the techniques and concepts that are important. Also although there seems to be a stigma associated to directed learning sessions I personally believe that these can be very useful and can often open yours

and others eyes to many different ways of tackling problems, not just veterinary related!

The anatomy museums are also a valuable support in the preparation for oral examinations and generally getting to grips with otherwise unseen anatomy i.e. in the live animal some of these anatomical landmarks cannot be visualised. There are many different DVDs and CD ROMs available from the library that are incredibly useful regarding visualising 3D concepts of anatomy and diagnostic techniques.

Finally the Blackboard Learning Environment (BLE) is a massive support as teaching material is accessible at the click of a mouse anywhere in the world. The BLE is also an immediate way of contacting academics about things that may be particularly perplexing as they are open to student queries.



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# 1. DISABILITY AT THE RVC: WHERE TO START

## 1.1 Before you apply

If you are thinking of studying at the Royal Veterinary College as an undergraduate or postgraduate, on a full-time or part-time course, the College will aim to support you in a number of ways. In line with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy, your application is considered on an individual basis and no presumptions are made about a disability and how it may affect you in relation to your chosen course.

A number of the courses offered at the College do require an element of physical capacity and core competencies, which must be completed to train and practice. The RVC will take its duty of care seriously and will not to promote false expectations for students with significantly limiting disabilities. All applications are considered on an individual basis and where reasonable adjustments can be made to the course, the College is committed to supporting all students to complete their course successfully and to enjoy it along the way!

Information visits are encouraged to help you make a decision about where to apply to study. It is a good idea for you to visit the College and gather information about what the course involves, how it will be assessed, what practical tasks you may need to undertake and what support might be available:

- Ask questions at open days about the course
- Send an email to the Disability Officer for information
- Read the relevant course material in the College prospectus
- Read through this Guide, section 2 covers course specifics in more detail

## 1.2 The application process – disclosing a disability

If you are applying for an undergraduate course via UCAS (or VMCAS if you are a student from the U.S.), you might feel reluctant to note on the form that you have dyslexia, or any other disability. All UK institutions now are much more switched on about receiving information about disabilities and have gained experience from supporting thousands of students with all kinds of disabilities up until this point (see page 1 for an RVC student perspective). Plus, it is the best way of making sure that you receive the right support, from the start of your course.



### 1.3 Occupational Health

When you tell us about a disability on your application form, you will receive a letter and a Disability Guide in your offer pack. In addition to this, ALL students are sent a health questionnaire to complete once an offer has been made. These are then viewed privately by the Occupational Health Team (see below) to see whether an appointment with them is necessary. It is essential to complete this form and return this by the required deadline.

Occupational Health (OH) provides a confidential service and is here to give you support. OH will be involved if you have a disability or long-term medical condition that may affect your ability to do the course.

An initial assessment, usually by health questionnaire/s, is made followed by a request for a medical report from your GP (General Practitioner or doctor) or consultant and appointment with the occupational health doctor, as appropriate. Information from your GP or consultant does require your written consent. The aim is to ensure your condition is not aggravated whilst at College and to identify if any additional assistance is needed. The Occupational Health Adviser or Doctor will maintain regular contact with you as required and can be contacted if you have any concerns.

#### **Occupational Health**

1st Floor, Northumberland Hall  
Hawkshead Campus

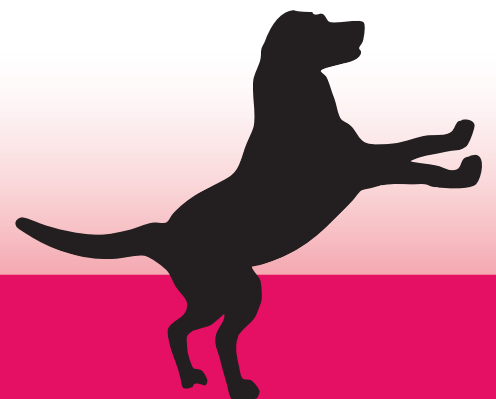
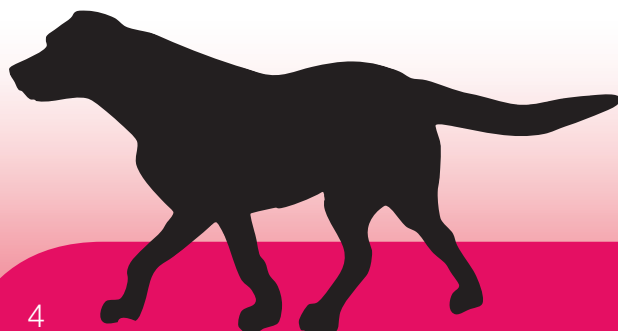
**Tel:** 01707 666355 (internal x 6355)

### 1.4 Sharing Information and confidentiality

Academic assessment of your application will not be affected if you include information about dyslexia, a health condition or a disability. In fact, we need to receive any information you have about special requirements as early as possible as this can take time to arrange. We can also advise you early about extra time procedures, funding available and other useful support, so that you feel that this is all sorted before you begin your studies.

Anything you tell us regarding your disability or health condition will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence. The College will only share this information on a 'need to know' basis. We may need to disclose information about your disability to another department so that support can be arranged. An example of this may be arranging extra time for examinations. If you would like any details to remain confidential between you and a particular department or member of staff, the College will attempt to provide any necessary support confidentially. In some cases, however, this may not be possible and the level of support you receive may be affected.

On a serious note, it is also an expectation that if you are aware of any circumstances which may impact on your ability to perform academically or in practice, these will be raised. The College wants you to succeed and with early knowledge, we can help you achieve your goals.



## 1.5 Advice about disability support

Advice about dedicated procedures and support for students can be provided by the Disability Officer (DO). You may have received support previously, in which case it's important that things are in place for you at the College, or you would like to know more about what is available. Areas covered by the DO include:

- > Applying for extra time or other examination arrangements
- > Dyslexia support; screening, obtaining a new diagnostic assessment and advice on funding available
- > Referrals for specialist dyslexia tuition
- > Referrals for extended library loans and research support
- > Information about Disabled Students' Allowance and assistance with the application process
- > Advice about assistive software or

equipment that may be useful on your course

- > Information about course requirements and how these might impact health conditions and learning styles
- > General advice about studying at the RVC with a health condition or disability.
- > Advice for international students with disabilities

Emma Price, the Disability Officer, is available each Wednesday for student appointments, at either Camden or Hawkshead on alternate weeks.

**Email:** [disability@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:disability@rvc.ac.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7468 5056

**Camden** - Room G30, Hobday Building

**Hawkshead** - Academic Registry,  
Northumberland Hall

**Any information you do tell us about will be dealt with sensitively and in confidence. Information about your dyslexia, disability or health condition is your own and will not be passed onto others without your consent.**

## 1.6 Physical Access to the College

Buildings at both the Camden and Hawkshead campuses are a mixture of old and new buildings. The Camden campus represents the oldest building at the College and for this reason, access may be limited. The Hawkshead campus, containing the newly built Eclipse building and LIVE centre teaching facilities, has a good level of access.

If you have particular access issues, it would be useful to contact the College in advance, to arrange an information visit so that you have the opportunity to determine any access issues. The College is engaged in an ongoing programme of developments to improve aspects of the physical estate. It is also recognised that physical access includes more than ramps and lifts and therefore if you have any sound or visual enhancement needs, it would be helpful to know in advance so that these may be arranged for you.

## 2. COURSES AT THE RVC: WHAT IS INVOLVED

Most courses at the RVC are a combination of academic and clinically-based learning. Many of the skills you will be developing will be new and may pose new challenges which you may not have considered. We have tried to outline below some of the key skills used on courses, to act as a trigger for you to think about any issues that may arise. Making adjustments and providing support is much easier if any potential difficulties are highlighted early on.

### 2.1 Undergraduate Courses Veterinary Medicine Courses (BVet Med, BSc/BVet Med Combined, BVet Med Accelerated, BSc intercalated options)

The experience you gain in a veterinary practice or out in the field before you apply will give you a good idea of what's in store from Veterinary Medicine.

Challenges and suggested adjustments for disabled students are outlined in detail for the B Vet Med program in a recent publication called Time to Take Stock:

Disability and Professional Competence, written by Anne Tynan during a research project at the Royal Veterinary College.

You can contact the Disability Officer for a copy of this report (see page 5).

The skills that must be demonstrated in order to register as a Veterinary Surgeon are laid out by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in their Day One Skills document. This is an important document for you to consider if you are thinking of undertaking any of the above courses:

[http://www.rcvs.org.uk/shared\\_asp\\_files/uploadedfiles/{62C9103C-3AA6-4D70-9C76-9490BA745E44}\\_day\\_one\\_skills.pdf](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/shared_asp_files/uploadedfiles/{62C9103C-3AA6-4D70-9C76-9490BA745E44}_day_one_skills.pdf)

In brief, particular competencies required as part of the B Vet Med program include:

- > Being able to cope with uncertainty and adapt to change – problem solving and flexibility
- > Handle and restrain an animal safely and humanely - including large animals
- > Attend all species in an emergency and provide basic first aid (bandaging, handling), out in the field or in practice
- > Perform laboratory tests and use radiographic and ultrasonic equipment
- > Perform a complete clinical examination, gross post-mortem etc
- > Undertake shift-working, including nights



- > Learn and develop skills whilst out in the field such as particular methods of bandaging
- > Undertake fine motor control tasks such as suturing, administering anaesthesia injections, orogastric tubing, biopsies etc

The intercalated option enables you to attend a course at an alternative institution. It's important to communicate with the Disability Officer at the RVC if you feel there might be support that is needed at the new host institution. Each university will have its own procedures for applying for extra time, so it's also useful to source their own disability guide for advice about how to apply and who to contact.

### **Science Courses (BSc Veterinary Sciences)**

The Veterinary Science programme is less physically demanding and focuses more on physiology, biology and mechanisms of disease in a practical, scientific setting. Through gaining scientific qualifications, you may have some idea of any specific needs you might have. Some of the key elements of these courses include:

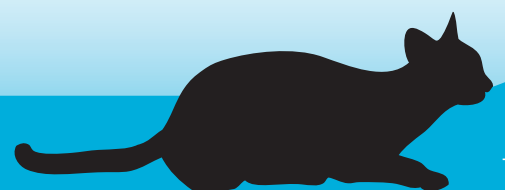
- > Library-based literature reviews and independent research
- > A supervised laboratory placement at the end of year two
- > Written projects and reports
- > Use of technical equipment
- > A major, final year scientific research project

### **Nursing Courses**

As with the Veterinary Medicine courses mentioned above, the BSc and the Foundation degree in Veterinary Nursing are determined by the key skills set down by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Once qualified, students will be placed on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses.

A large proportion of these courses are practical training, involving shift work, travelling to placements and being on call. Some of the skills you will develop in order to qualify are:

- > A level of academic knowledge in the science of the healthy and sick animals and nursing care. You will attend lectures, sit exams and do research from journals and books
- > Be flexible and adaptable in practice, performing a variety of roles
- > Be a key member of a veterinary team, assisting and advising colleagues
- > Communicate with understanding and compassion to clients and owners, as well as educating owners about the health and welfare of their animals
- > Undertake diagnostic tests, such as taking blood samples
- > Administer medical treatments, such as injections and eye drops
- > Handle and restrain animals safely and humanely
- > Perform minor surgical procedures and suturing



As with any subject, it's important you ask about any access issues before you apply. Use the open day as an opportunity to talk to someone in confidence about what the course involves and any adjustments you may need.

## 2.2 Postgraduate Courses

If you are considering a postgraduate course and you have a disability, you may have some idea of any support you need from your previous degree. If you have acquired a disability, it may be useful to discuss any access or support available with the Graduate School or the DO.

The range of courses offered and the specialisms involved are too detailed to mention here, therefore it may be better to make an appointment to see someone at the RVC or write with any specific questions about a disability to [disability@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:disability@rvc.ac.uk) before you apply.

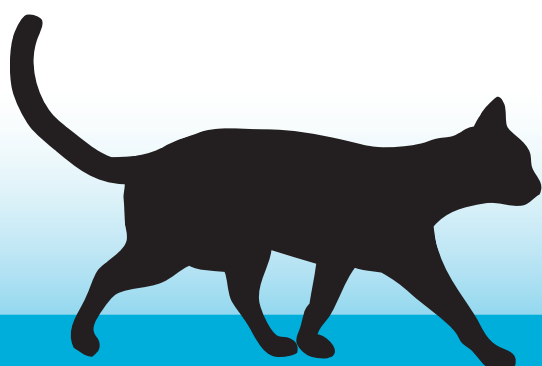
## The Graduate School

Camden Campus  
Royal College Street  
London NW1 0TU  
United Kingdom

**Email:** [graduateschool@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:graduateschool@rvc.ac.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7468 5134

**Fax:** 020 7468 5060



# 3. FACILITIES AND SUPPORT AT THE RVC

## 3.1 Multi-sensory Learning Resources

**For students with disabilities, the way that you are taught, or given learning materials may have a large impact on your success on your course. Students with dyslexia or specific learning differences may find that processing continuous black text, from a white background, may overload memory. You might find it difficult to recall information or distinguish one article from another. For students with long-term health conditions, or processing difficulties, different methods of learning or different learning materials may help.**

You may have a hearing loss, so visual materials might be really useful, or you may have co-ordination difficulties and would like to revise procedures from video in your own time.

Multi-sensory learning is all about using a variety of methods to support your learning. The RVC is keen to develop the number of ways of accessing materials.

To break away from the text books, students at the RVC can try the following:

### **Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**

This is an online facility where you can link up to timetables, handouts and learning materials linked to your course modules to get notes and recordings online. During 2006-07, first year students were encouraged to record lectures and upload their audio files onto Blackboard, for others to access. This is the main hub

where you can access all the following facilities. Documents are usually provided in pdf format. Pdf conversion software may help you adapt documents to suit your font style or colour.

### **RVC Image bank, digital Recordings and DVDs**

This supports learning through pictures of techniques, visual recordings of surgery and practical methods so that you can revise these to develop your own skills. The E-Media team at the RVC are keen to expand on the number of recordings available for students and many lectures provide CD-Roms of procedures which can be borrowed from the library. Listening to, or viewing procedures again can be a memory aid.

### **Podcasts and 'potcasts'**

These are sound files about RVC research and taught sessions (Podcasts) which can be downloaded onto your MP3 player to listen to, perhaps when travelling



to College or in the evenings. Potcasts are being developed by the E-Media team and use the anatomy 'pots' to provide annotated descriptions of anatomical structures. These act as a helpful reminder - in colour!

### **Study Skills**

At the Royal Veterinary College learning skills support is offered in two different ways.

There are sign up sessions such as Stress in Oral Exams, MCQ Technique, Exam Revision techniques, Essay writing, etc. Notices about these sessions appear on the Intranet so look out for adverts. For more urgent problems, or for specific help, one-to-one sessions are also available. You can book appointments to meet and discuss any personal learning dilemmas with Helen Shore, Learning Development Officer. These sessions are confidential and can cover any topic that you want to discuss. Some examples of topics are: making sense of notes; learning styles; communication skills; time management; presentation skills; group work problems; and English language difficulties.

For one-to-one sessions, questions or requests please contact Helen (ext 6029) or email [hshore@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:hshore@rvc.ac.uk).

### **Online Journals and Electronic texts**

By accessing electronic texts and journals, you may be able to listen, as well as read, text that is provided online. Dyslexic students may find this useful if reading large amounts of text is tiring, or if you find it easier to process aural information. The Disabled Students' Allowance can pay for a package called TextHelp Read & Write, which allows you to highlight text and have this read back to you via headphones (see page 18).

### **Online Learning Course and the 'Learning Lab'**

The Online learning course aims to supplement your own degree programme by providing tasks and information to help develop

your knowledge. It's a useful way of testing yourself before examinations and practising multiple choice question (MCQ) papers before the real thing! Learning is supported by visual diagrams, key points and test questions. This can help you approach reading with a question, to make research quicker and more directed.

### **My Pad trials**

During 2006-2007, fourth and fifth year BVet Med students are testing a model of mobile computer/phone to assess how this might help their learning experience. The aim is for students to be able to record their own notes, organise these for access in the future and reflect on what they have learnt, in a practical way, whilst working on busy clinical rotations. Taking handwritten notes in this setting is difficult whilst learning all the time, so the MyPad trails aim to find a useful solution for students. Watch this space about how this type of device could be useful for you. Alternatively, something similar could be provided via the Disabled Students' Allowance (see page 18).

## **3.2 Useful assistance in the library**

### **Extended loans**

Extended loans will be offered to students with particular disabilities or health conditions on one-week loans, so that books will be available for a two-week loan period. If you want to arrange extended loans, you should contact the Disability Officer (email [disability@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:disability@rvc.ac.uk)) when you have enrolled at the RVC and 'register' for extended loans. Your name will be sent to the library and you will

receive a confirmation email from the Library Information Assistant, Sally Burton.

### **Photocopying and Printing**

Students in receipt of disabled students' allowance are often allowed to recover any extra costs of 'consumables' and included in this is an allowance for photocopying and printing. This is in recognition that dyslexic students will often highlight, annotate and underline key words when reading, to make comprehension and cross-referencing easier.

To claim back these costs at both libraries (Camden and Hawkshead), you will need to give your charge-card to a member of staff at Counter Services who will charge it and give you a receipt.

### **Individual inductions**

These are available with Sally and can be beneficial for students who may need assistance finding useful materials, or independent research. In addition, assistance with elected projects can also be offered by Sally, this can be useful if you have selected a subject and need help to find suitable resources.

### **Essay writing - Reference Manager**

Endnote is a reference managing software tool which can help you organise all your references and bibliography when writing essays. This tool can also be used to keep track of useful bits of information you may find helpful later on, when revising. The package is linked to Microsoft Word and is available on all of the public machines. This package and its functions could be very useful for dyslexic

students struggling with referencing. Sally can also offer one-to-one assistance with using Endnote.

For any information about the above provisions, contact the Disability Officer, or Sally Burton, Information Assistant.

disability@rvc.ac.uk

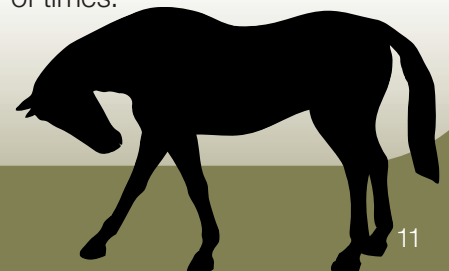
sburton@rvc.ac.uk

### **3.3 Practising Clinical Skills**

As mentioned on page 6, courses at the College revolve around clinical, practical skills. If you have a physical or motor control difficulty, or you have problems with processing certain types of information, problem solving skills and flexibility may be necessary to overcome challenges that may present in a clinical setting. Practising clinical skills and methods to develop your knowledge will be a useful way of ensuring that you feel comfortable and confident in a clinical setting, as well as ensuring that all the key competencies are met.

### **Clinical Skills Centre**

The Clinical Skills Centre allows students to practice skills and methods in preparation for exams, with a team of trained staff on hand to help out. The Centre's design and resources facilitate and encourage self-directed learning. Each clinical skill is broken down into its component parts so that working in pairs, students may learn how to perform skills from a 'checklist'. With the use of appropriate diagrams and advice and assistance from two qualified veterinary nurse technicians employed in the Centre, each task can be attempted any number of times.



### 3.4 Specialist equipment

If you need specialist items to enable you to study, or you feel that aspects of the course could be made easier with assistive technology to suit your disability, contact the Disability Officer, who can advise on how this can be purchased for you. Other students have obtained amplified stethoscopes, in the case of a hearing loss, or a personal organiser if you have dyslexia or a mental health condition. Alternatively, you may need a special chair to help you sit down on clinics.

### 3.5 Special Examination Arrangements

Depending on your needs you may require some special arrangements during examinations, in the case of dyslexia, for example, you may need extra time in which to complete exams or vivas. Some conditions may require rest breaks or taking the exam in a private room, with access to WC facilities.

The College has an application form which you will need to complete to notify the College's Exam Officers what should be organised for

you. The application form can be completed after you enrol at the College, at least one month before your first exam. You will need to submit up-to-date documentary evidence in support of your request. An email is sent out to students at the start of the academic year with instructions. Forms can also be obtained from Registry, the Disability Officer or online (from the Student Regulations and Procedures pages of the Intranet).

### 3.6 Accommodation

The College's residences are located in both North London, near to the Camden Campus and in Potters Bar, near to the Hawkshead Campus.

When applying for accommodation, it is important that you state any particular needs on the application form, or at the earliest opportunity. Without prior knowledge about a specific need, the College may be unable to allocate suitable accommodation later on in the process.

#### What evidence do I need to support my application for special exam arrangements?

- > This should be up-to-date – within the last 12 months for medical conditions, or in the case of dyslexia a report completed within the last five years
- > Dyslexia reports should be detailed and include subtest scores from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS). This should have been completed after you were 16, to ensure it is an adult-based test.
- > Medical information should be on headed paper and written by a suitably qualified medical professional, such as your GP, consultant or medical specialist.



The table below indicates the facilities available in the halls, however if you have specific requirements, like use of a private fridge to store medication, you should state this on your accommodation application form.

### College Close

This comprises 17 self-sufficient houses at the Hawkshead Campus for up to six people sharing. These have an external phone line for internet connection, limited parking and are self-catered.

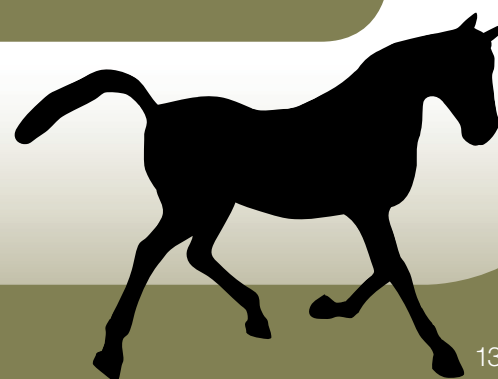
### Intercollegiate Halls

The College also has limited access to University of London halls of residences. Details about these residences and their facilities can be viewed online via the University

of London Accommodation pages at <http://www.london.ac.uk/accom>.

It may be that through the Disabled Students' Allowance (see page 18) you have been recommended and purchased specific equipment, such as an ergonomic desk or chair. The Residences are happy to accommodate these items if you need to bring anything with you, however it may be worth noting any large items with the residence, like an orthopaedic mattress, to ensure that the dimensions of your room can fit them.

	College Grove (Camden)	Mary Brancker House (c)	Northumberland Hall (HH)	Oldham Hall (HH)
Single Occupancy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
En-suite bathroom	Yes	Yes	No	No
Self-catering	Yes	Yes	Catered	Yes
Internet Connection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Data-point	No	No	No	No
Parking	No	Limited	Limited	Limited
Ground floor accommodation	Yes	No	No	Yes
Distance to College	On campus	20 mins walk	On campus	On campus



## 4. SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA OR SPLDS

The Disability Officer can provide information and advice about support available to students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia both at the RVC and nationally, for all students. You may have previously been diagnosed at school or college and know the type of support you need, or you may need an up-to-date assessment. The DO can advise if you think you may be dyslexic and would like to apply for a diagnostic test with an Educational Psychologist. We aim to support dyslexic students in a number of ways:

### > **Application for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

Students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties are eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance. This Allowance can fund the cost of a home computer, recording device to aid with taking lecture notes, specialist software to help with studying (see page 18) and weekly one-to-one tuition.

> **One-to-one study skills tuition** if it is felt that you could benefit from individual study skills sessions throughout a longer period of

### **Dyslexia Testing:**

This is a two-stage process involving an initial 'screening' or basic checklist, followed by a full assessment by an Educational Psychologist (EP). The checklist is 20 basic yes/no questions which can be quickly filled out. You can talk through your results with the Disability Officer who will refer you to an EP if necessary.

> **Dyslexia screening** if you think you may be dyslexic but as yet have not looked further into this, the Disability Officer can provide an initial checklist and talk through any questions you may have.

> **Diagnostic report** The College may be able to help you with funding for a new, or an up-to-date diagnostic report. We also provide a factsheet with a list of recommended Educational Psychologists in Central London who can test for dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.

> **After your assessment** you can make an appointment with the Disability Officer to talk through your report. The DO will also help you access any support that you might need, such as extended loans of extra time for exams.

time, these can be arranged by referral from the DO.

The College has Learning Support Advisers (see page 9) who you can contact for free support, at any time during your course. You may also want to attend sessions with a dedicated dyslexia study skills tutor, which can be arranged for you.

### > **Special examination arrangements**

depending on your needs you may require some special arrangements during examinations.

### > **Informing other services and staff at the College**

The DO can help you to co-ordinate any needs across departments or with tutors, Registry and the Library.

# 5. HEALTH AND WELFARE

## 5.1 Health Services

If you don't already have a doctor in the London area, you should register with a local practice. If you have ongoing health needs, this can give you regular access to medication, advice and emergency services.

Some students with long-term health conditions want to maintain a relationship with their current doctor, who knows them in detail. It is often the case that if you sign on with a local doctor, your existing doctor will write in detail to them about your case, if necessary.

You should register with a GP who is nearest to where you are living. For a list of local practices, look at <http://www.nhs.uk/England/doctors>. Specific practices are also listed on Blackboard VLE.

## 5.2 Mental health and Counselling

Undertaking a full-time course, away from home can be stressful and it is important to realise that you are not alone if you are feeling the pressure of these changes. People react very differently to relocating, the workload and taking on your own independence. Friends can provide immediate support; however you should discuss any worries or problems with any of your tutors/mentors at any time.

The College also has a list of dedicated Staff Advisors, listed on Blackboard VLE who you can approach for help and support.

Students of the College currently have access to the Counselling Services within the University of London and the University of Hertfordshire. This support is available free of charge to students. The team are independent to any teaching and therefore you can speak freely and in confidence about problems you may be having.

The contact details for the Counselling Services are provided on Blackboard, under the Student Support Section and Personal Support subsection.

## 5.3 Transport

Transport in and around the capital is an important part of living in London. It is useful to be aware of the different services available, if you have mobility difficulties or a long-term health condition.



Transport for London is taking steps to make buses, the Underground network, trains and other methods fully accessible to Londoners. Their web pages provide detailed information about accessible routes, tube maps listing stations with lift access and information about how to book taxis: [http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/ph\\_accessibility.shtml](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/ph_accessibility.shtml)

### **Freedom Pass**

The freedom pass allows free travel on London's public transport for eligible disabled people (including students) who live in a London borough (if you are based in Camden this includes you). The freedom pass gives you free travel on buses, Tube, trains, Docklands Light Railway and trams in London.

This includes your address if you are living in one of the College's halls of residence. The pass is paid for by your local council. Application forms are available from your Post Office or town hall, or the local borough website, depending on the borough in which you live.

For more information about the freedom pass and how to obtain one:

[www.freedompass.org/home.html](http://www.freedompass.org/home.html)

### **Travelling to College by car**

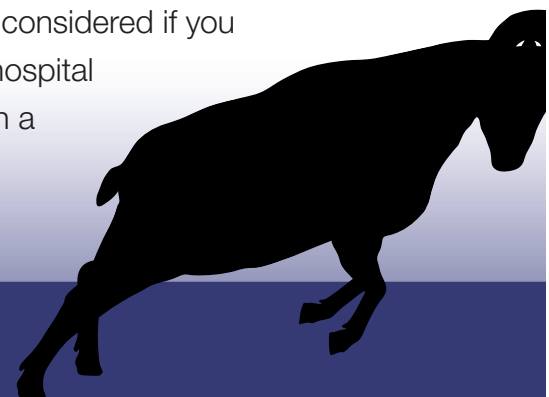
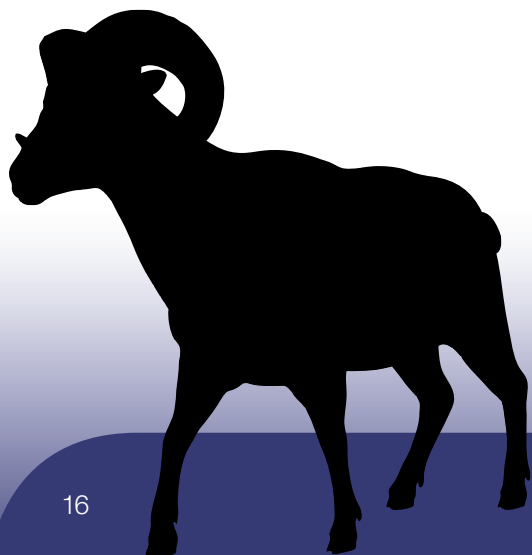
Because of the Central London location of the Camden Campus and the rural location of Potters Bar, car parking for any student can be a challenge. There is no publicly available off-street parking at the Camden or Hawkshead Campus.

The Camden site is well served by buses, trains and the underground. At Hawkshead, student transport is provided. Three routes are operated in the mornings, lunchtimes and evenings – timetables are available on Blackboard. If you have a European blue parking badge you can use this outside the Camden Campus.

Students are able to apply for a special parking permit. If your condition is permanent, you will be referred to Occupational Health who would confirm your eligibility for a permit. If you have already seen Occupational Health, they will be able to provide notification of your condition upon request (see page 4).

If you have a temporary mobility problem, you would also be referred but would usually be given a date for the permit to be reviewed. There is a disability parking bay at Camden and a space number at Hawkshead.

At Hawkshead, temporary parking permits for students are considered if you need to attend hospital appointments on a



regular basis, for example. You can apply for a parking permit on the days of their appointments etc. Occupational Health can advise on this.

### **Congestion Charging**

The Congestion Charge is a scheme to reduce the amount of traffic travelling through the capital during the week. The scheme operates within a designated area (zone) in Central London and car drivers are required to pay an £8 charge per day (£10 if you pay by midnight following charging day) for driving within the Congestion Charge Zone.

Camden does not fall within the Central London congestion charge zone, however bear the charge in mind if you're planning to travel throughout London.

If you have a blue badge, you will not be required to pay the daily £8 Congestion Charge. You don't need to own, or be driving the vehicle to be eligible for the discount and you may register up to two vehicles which you would normally use for travelling in to London. You will need to register with Transport for London and an initial registration fee of £10 is required (though you may be able to claim this back from the Disabled Students' Allowance, see page 18). You can download a registration form online from:

**Web:** [www.cclondon.com/exemptions.shtml](http://www.cclondon.com/exemptions.shtml)

**Tel:** 0845 900 1234

### **5.4 Other sources of support**

The College has a list of Staff Advisors who you can contact for one-to-one advice about personal issues that might be affecting you. These individuals are listed within the Student Support section of Blackboard, under Personal Support.

In addition, the student mentoring scheme aims to provide more informal support.

The following people are also available to approach for advice on personal issues:

#### **Students Union Welfare Officer**

**Email:** [suwelfare@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:suwelfare@rvc.ac.uk)

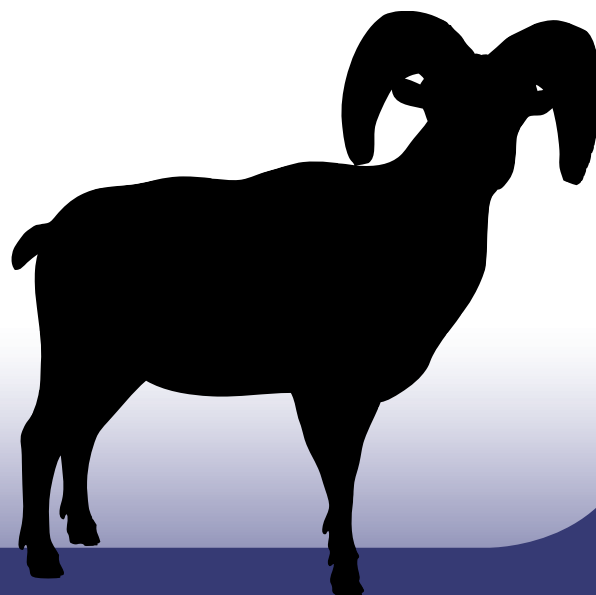
**Tel:** 020 7468 6310

#### **College Chaplain**

Reverend Giles Legood

**Email:** [glegood@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:glegood@rvc.ac.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7468 5745



## 6. FINANCIAL HELP

There are specific funds available to you, if you have costs arising from studying with a disability. If you are a home student, you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance from your funding body. Home students are classified as 'individuals who are 'settled' in the UK or if you have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (Channel Islands and Isle of Man) for a full three years for non-study related purposes'. International students and students from the European Community are not eligible for Disabled Students Allowance. If you are an International or EU student, you may be able to apply to the College for funds to support you with any disability-related costs. Contact the Disability Officer for more information.

### 6.1 Disabled Students' Allowances

The Disabled Students' Allowance (or DSA) is a financial package from the UK Government which helps pay for extra costs you may have as a direct result of studying in higher education with a disability.

The DSA is not means-tested, which means that any other income or benefits you receive do not affect your entitlement. Your parent's income will also not be taken into account.

### Am I eligible?

You can apply for the DSA if you have a disability (we can advise you on what this is but generally this does include dyslexia, other specific learning difficulties or a long term illness), you are a home-domiciled student and you are:

- > a full- or part-time undergraduate
- > on a part-time course which is equivalent to at least 50 per cent of the full time course
- > a postgraduate attending a recognised taught or research-based course.

### What can the DSA pay for?

DSAs are not paid as a set amount and the actual amount you will receive is calculated according to your needs. Previously students with disabilities have purchased computers with specialist software, recording devices for lectures, notetaking or adult dyslexia tuition, video magnifiers, additional photocopying or printing costs and extra books.

Costs unconnected with a disability cannot be claimed from the Allowance, nor can costs you would have incurred if you were not a student. For example you cannot claim for medicines or specialist treatments. Also, the cost of identifying a disability cannot be paid for through the DSA, such as a dyslexia assessment. This cost can be claimed through the College's Access to Learning Fund, or other funds



for an international student.

There are four components which make up the undergraduate DSA. The maximum amounts students can receive in the academic year 2007-2008 are given below as a guide. For following academic years, the amounts will rise slightly with inflation:

### **Undergraduate courses**

- > Specialist equipment (for whole course) up to £4,905
- > Non-medical helpers (annual) up to £12,420 (part-time up to £9,315)
- > General costs (annual) up to £1,640 (part-time up to £1,230)
- > Extra travel costs (annual) within reasonable limits

### **Part-time courses**

If you plan to study part-time, the specialist equipment allowance remains at £4,905 for the whole of your course. The other components are calculated by using the percentage of the fulltime rate i.e. 50% of a full time course results in 50% of the non-medical helper's component. The maximum amounts available are shown above.

### **Postgraduate courses**

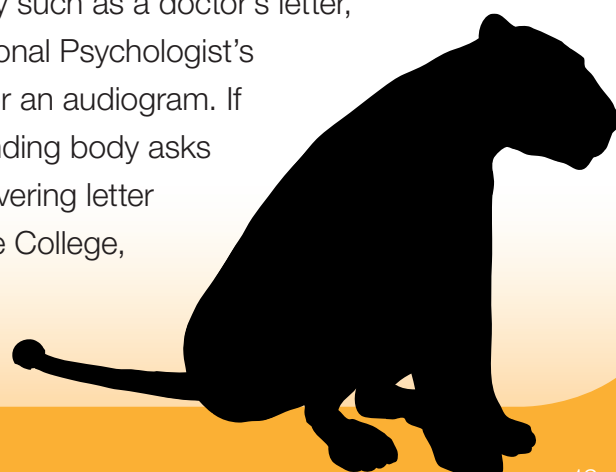
There is one allowance to meet all the costs of up to £5,915 a year for both full-time and part-time postgraduate students. For Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) students, DSA is funded at the undergraduate rate shown above.

### **How and when should I apply?**

The DSA is administered through your funding body. This is likely to be your Local Authority (LA). Your application is assessed by your LA and the monies are then paid by the Student Loans Company. A pilot scheme to trial SLC administration of these funds is currently underway with a small number of LAs, more information about this Scheme and which LAs are involved in the trial is available in the Government's Bridging the Gap document (see below).

If you have proof of acceptance on to your course, contact your LA and tell them about your disability. They will advise you about how to apply. It is important to start the application process as soon as possible so that support can be in place at the start of your course. You are able to do this when completing your financial assessment form (PR1) for your student loan entitlement. You will then need to complete a DSA1 form, which can also be downloaded from the Direct.gov.uk website. Links to this application form and the Bridging the Gap document are also provided at the bottom of this section.

All funding bodies will need proof of your disability such as a doctor's letter, Educational Psychologist's report or an audiogram. If your funding body asks for a covering letter from the College,



The Registry can do this on your behalf. More detailed information about Disabled Students' Allowances can be found via the Direct.go.uk website. The detailed guide about DSAs and application form are available from there. In addition, for medical, dental and nursing courses the Department of Health produce a guide which includes information about DSAs. The NHS DSA form is also downloadable from that site:

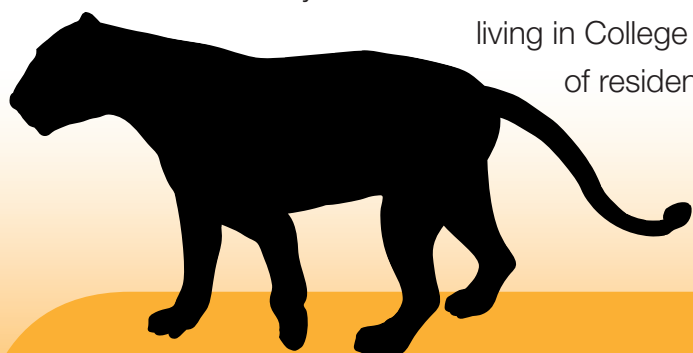
[www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/students/stu\\_students\\_with\\_d.1.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/students/stu_students_with_d.1.shtml)

[www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk/](http://www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk/)

## 6.2 Disability-related benefits and the Welfare Service

Before you start your course you should get detailed advice from your local Jobcentre Plus Office about any benefits for which you might be eligible.

As a part-time or full-time student with a disability, you may be eligible to claim Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Working Tax Credit (if you are working), Housing Benefit and/or Disability Living Allowance. Income Support and Housing Benefit are means-tested and your student loan or grant will be taken into account as income. Housing Benefit can now be claimed by disabled students who are living in College halls of residence.



Your student loan or grant will not affect the amount of Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Working Tax Credit for which you are eligible. If you are in receipt of any of these benefits, your entitlement to the Disabled Students' Allowance is not affected.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or your Jobcentre Plus Office should always be consulted if you are going to study a higher education course as this can affect your entitlement. If you are worried that your disability-related benefits may be withdrawn, we strongly recommend that you to contact the College Welfare Adviser.

The College's Access to Learning Fund may be able to fund some health-related items that are not covered by the DSA, such as specific dietary requirements in the case of cystic fibrosis, or travel costs for treatment. For more information, contact the Welfare Adviser.

### College Welfare Adviser

Simon Beale

**Email:** sbeale@rvc.ac.uk

**Tel:** 020 7468 1180 (Camden)  
01707 666 026 (HH)

### Benefits Enquiry Line

(open Monday to Friday  
8.30-18.30, Saturday 9.00-13.00)

**Tel:** 0800 882200

**Text:** 0800 243355

**Web:** [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

# CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

## BEFORE ENROLMENT

- Have you considered any support you might need to study in HE and your chosen course
- Ask questions at any Open Days or to the Disability Officer about access issues
- Obtain up-to-date medical information about any condition, or an Educational Psychologists report (see page 12)
- Inform the College of any disability-related needs
- State any specific needs on your application form for accommodation
- Tick the disability box on your financial assessment form
- Apply for Disabled Students Allowance (page 18) via your funding body
- Organise a needs assessment and asked for a copy of the needs report to be sent to the Disability Officer at the RVC

## AFTER ENROLMENT

- Apply for any special exam arrangements
- Register with a local GP
- Consider applying for a Freedom Pass for free travel for disabled students (page 16)
- Contact the Disability Officer to arrange any ongoing support, such as study skills
- Notify your Academic tutor or the Senior Tutor about any specific course-related needs

## USEFUL CONTACTS > > >



# USEFUL CONTACTS

## **Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities**

General advice, information and guidance about studying with a disability

**Freephone:** 0800 328 5050 – Information Service (13.30 to 1630 Monday to Friday)

**Textphone:** 0800 068 2422

**Fax:** 020 7450 0650

**Email:** [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

## **Dyslexia Action (formerly the Dyslexia Institute)** (London, Victoria area)

Dyslexia reports, study skills tuition and information about dyslexia and dyspraxia

**Tel:** 020 7730 8890

**Fax:** 020 7730 0273

**Email:** [london@dyslexiaaction.org.uk](mailto:london@dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/>

## **Independent Dyslexia Consultants**

(London, Euston area)

For dyslexia assessments and study skills tuition

**Tel:** 020 7388 8744

**Fax:** 020 7387 7968

## **Disability Rights Commission**

General advice on your rights as an individual with a disability

**Tel:** 0845 7 622 633

**Fax:** 0845 7 778 878

**Email:** [ddahelp@stra.sitel.co.uk](mailto:ddahelp@stra.sitel.co.uk)

**Website:** [www.drc.org.uk](http://www.drc.org.uk)

## **Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)**

Up to date information from the Government about disability support at university

**Tel:** 0800 731 9133

**Website:** [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport)

